

Evaluating Front Office Operations

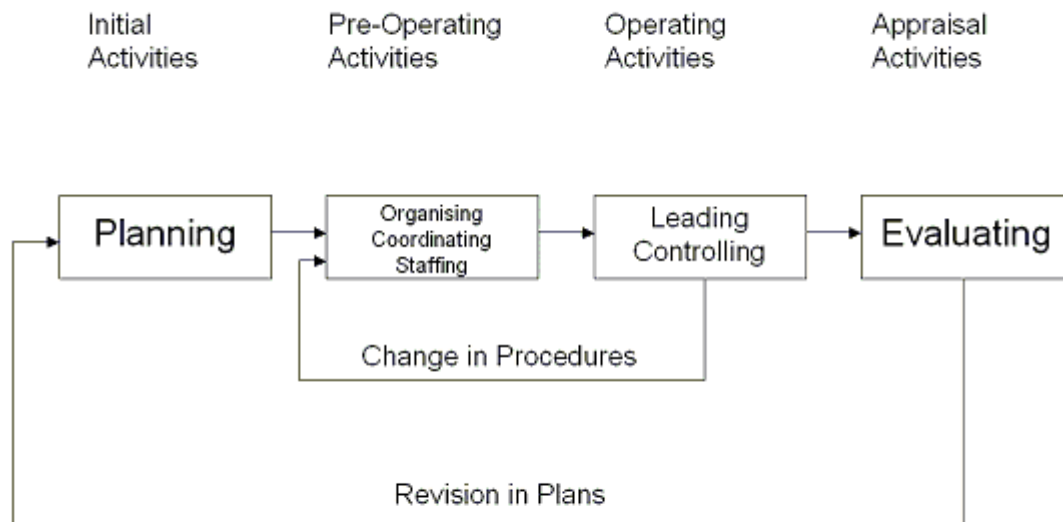
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Introduction

Throughout our lectures we have studied various aspects of Front Office management, as well as issues the Front Office Manager should be well aware of. Here we will look into the actual Management Functions – the concepts of which apply to any manager in hospitality operations.

Management functions

The process of front office management can be divided into specific management functions as described by Kasavana.



Planning

This is perhaps the most important of functions. We have already seen that before we can even start operating we have to plan our business. This is effectively what we did when we planned our room rates based on our required return on investment. Planning gives us direction and focus. If a Front Office Manager does not plan, he may become overly involved with tasks that are inconsistent with what should be his department's goals.

Kasavana recommends that the first step in planning is defining the department's goals, which should then be used as a guide to planning more specific, measurable objectives. Planning also includes determining the strategies that will be used to attain the objectives.

Organising

A good Front Office Manager must be able to organise his staff, by dividing work amongst them. Work cannot be always divided equally – some members of staff will have certain strengths which cannot be overlooked. However, dividing work must ensure everyone gets a fair treatment so that work can be completed on time. Organising will involve determining in which order tasks are to be performed and establishing completion dates for each group of tasks.

Coordinating

This will involve bringing together and using available resources to achieve planned goals. It is useless to organise work without effectively coordinating it, as it will often become apparent (through coordinating work) that it may be necessary to make changes to the way things are organised.

Staffing

Having determined your objectives and planned goals you need to make sure that you have recruited the best qualified staff for your positions. Staffing involves scheduling employees. This process will involve determining the number of employees required to cater for the expected demand – to meet guest and operational needs under specified conditions.

Leading

A Front Office Manager must be a leader – capable of directing his staff, overseeing, motivating, training, disciplining, and setting an example. The Front Office Manager must be able to analyse the work to be done, organise tasks in a logical order, whilst bearing in mind the conditions within which employees are expected to perform their work.

A good Front Office Manager will be able to step into situations where his staff cannot deal with the workload.

Controlling

Every front office will have a system of internal controls to keep in check the hotel's assets and protect its revenue. A Front Office Manager must ensure that his staff follow established procedures. The hotel will also have performance targets, both in terms of revenue budgets as well as employment targets, and the Front Office Manager will exercise a control function when keeping front office operations on course in attaining planned goals.

Evaluating

This is the function of determining to what extent planned goals are attained. Unfortunately this function is often overlooked or performed without much thought. Evaluating involves reviewing and when necessary revising front office goals. This is why these management functions are often referred to as the "management cycle" because management is a continuous cycle of planning, organising, motivating and reviewing.

Operating ratios

In a past lecture we looked at occupancy ratios and how these may be used to evaluate departmental performance. The following operating ratios look at the financial position of front office, evaluating for instance the major expenses incurred by the front office operation.

Dividing the payroll and related expenses of the rooms division by the department's net revenue yields one of the most frequently analysed areas of front office operations: labour cost. The table in the next page gives us a number of operating ratios that may be used.

	Net Revenue	Payroll and related expenses	Other expenses	Departmental income
% of total hotel revenue	X			
% of departmental revenue		X	X	X
% of total hotel payroll and related expenses		X	X	
% change from prior period		X		
% change from budget	X	X	X	X
per available room	X	X	X	X
per occupied room	X	X	X	X

Bibliography

Abbott P. and Lewry S., Front Office: Procedures, social skills and management Butterworth Heinemann, 1991

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